

Channel disintegration: a hidden key to customer satisfaction and vendor lock-in

International
Journal of Retail &
Distribution
Management

1

Yu-Hui Fang

Department of Accounting, Tamkang University, New Taipei City, Taiwan, and

Chia-Ying Li

National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung, Taiwan

Received 21 February 2025
Revised 29 March 2025
11 August 2025
20 August 2025
Accepted 6 January 2026

Abstract

Purpose – While integrating online and offline stores prevents channel cannibalization, the process is complex and multifaceted. This study examines how channel disintegration influences vendor lock-in through the surprise effect, considering shopping motivation as a moderator between surprise and delight.

Design/methodology/approach – Data from 434 customers of two well-known apparel brands were analyzed using structural equation modelling.

Findings – Inconsistent price and product across channels generate surprise, which triggers delight, influencing satisfaction and vendor lock-in. Additionally, variety seeking and bargain hunting amplify the effect of surprise on delight.

Originality/value – Because customers may encounter unpredictable experiences across touchpoints, inconsistent customer journeys can be attractive. However, limited research has explored how inconsistent promotion and inconsistent price and product shape emotions and satisfaction. These insights help retailers develop multichannel marketing strategies to enhance customer retention.

Keywords Surprise effect, Channel disintegration, Vendor lock-in, Shopping motivation

Paper type Research article

1. Introduction

The proliferation of marketing channels enables customers to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of shopping activities across multiple stages of their journey (Liu and Liu, 2024). Omnichannel retailing is defined as “an integrated sales experience that melds the advantage of physical stores with the information-rich experience of online shopping (Verhoef *et al.*, 2015).” Through this lens, omnichannel retailing integrates physical and virtual platforms to create a seamless customer experience (Chang and Geng, 2022). Despite the growing prevalence of omnichannel strategies in marketing practice (Radowska *et al.*, 2024), many retailers continue to implement channel-specific differentiation. For instance, UNIQLO provides app-exclusive discounts that are not available in physical stores, while Zara staggers product releases across online and offline platforms. In the supermarket sector, Costco and Carrefour often assign product categories or promotions exclusively to one channel. Even without explicit strategic intent, discrepancies in pricing, assortments, and promotions remain prevalent across retail environments.

However, empirical research presents mixed findings on how channel disintegration influences customer behaviour. Gasparin *et al.* (2022) suggest that customers anticipate some inconsistencies across touchpoints and that such differences do not necessarily diminish the

© Yu-Hui Fang and Chia-Ying Li. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at [Link to the terms of the CC BY 4.0 licence](#).

Funding: This work was supported by National Science and Technology Council (award number: 112-2628-H-110-008-MY2 and 113-2410-H-032-049).



International Journal of Retail &
Distribution Management
Vol. 54 No. 13, 2026
pp. 1-17

Emerald Publishing Limited
e-ISSN: 1758-6690
p-ISSN: 0959-0552

DOI 10.1108/IJRDM-02-2025-0131

shopping experience. Customers understand the unique characteristics of each channel and often exploit them for personal gain (Kim and Han, 2023). Furthermore, Neslin (2022) contends that price consistency across touchpoints does not guarantee satisfaction due to varying customer sensitivities and switching costs.

Achieving seamless channel integration remains a considerable challenge for retailers aiming to enhance customer acquisition and retention (Gao and Huang, 2021). Integration initiatives require substantial investment in technological infrastructure and service platforms (Radomska *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, omnichannel retailing demands strategic alignment across customer journey stages, including uniform pricing, and coherent delivery performance (Sorkun *et al.*, 2020; Towers and Towers, 2022). The complexity of achieving cross-channel alignment in branding, promotion, pricing, and assortment continues to warrant further academic inquiry.

Given that online and offline channels attract distinct consumer segments, firms often tailor their strategies based on segment-specific price elasticity and purchase behaviour (Neslin, 2022). A uniform marketing mix may not be optimal, as consumer needs and expectations differ by segment and touchpoint. Prior research suggests that encounters with unexpected offers or product assortments across channels can elicit surprise (Vanhamme, 2000), which in turn affects information processing and decision-making (Shibly and Chatterjee, 2020). Although surprise is often associated with positive outcomes, it also leads to negative emotions, depending on how the situation is appraised (Ortony *et al.*, 1988). Thus, surprise is considered as a valence-neutral emotional state that plays a fundamental role in shaping consumers' responses to unexpected stimuli. Accordingly, this study posits that customers may experience surprise in response to inconsistent marketing cues. In contrast to prior studies emphasizing full integration, the present research investigates whether disintegration enhances customer retention through the mechanism of surprise. This study examines the following research question.

RQ1. Could channel disintegration lead to vendor lock-in for customers by leveraging the surprise effect?

Shopping motivation plays a pivotal role in consumer behaviour analysis, market segmentation, and marketing strategy formulation (Casteran *et al.*, 2023). It reveals consumers' underlying goals in shopping behaviour (Tena-Monferrer *et al.*, 2022). These goals, influenced by individual characteristics, shape consumers' channel preferences at various stages of the shopping journey (Kim *et al.*, 2024). Accordingly, this study also examines the following question:

RQ2. Does the impact of channel disintegration on customer decisions depend on their shopping motivations?

This study explores the relationship between channel disintegration and surprise, with anticipation serving as a moderating factor. It further examines the downstream effects of surprise on emotional outcomes, specifically delight, which influence satisfaction and vendor lock-in. In addition, three shopping motivations, namely efficiency shopping, bargain hunting, and variety seeking, are proposed to moderate the relationship between surprise and delight. The findings aim to offer strategic insights for retailers seeking to optimize multichannel marketing efforts to enhance customer retention.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Channel disintegration

Channel integration reflects the extent to which firms align multiple channels to enhance synergy and deliver seamless shopping (Lin *et al.*, 2023). Customers generally value well-integrated channels that match their preferences. Prior research has highlighted the importance of integration quality (Le and Nguyen-Le, 2021; Lin *et al.*, 2023), channel congruency (Djofack *et al.*, 2023), integration mechanisms (Gao and Huang, 2021), and touchpoint complementarity (Lazaris *et al.*, 2021). These studies emphasize consistency in content and

service configuration as critical to customer experience. When integration is achieved, customers benefit from uniform prices and quality across channels, leading to seamless transactions (Gao *et al.*, 2020). Accordingly, minimizing inconsistencies has been deemed vital for sustaining customer relationships (Park and Kim, 2019).

However, inconsistencies can also yield benefits by increasing perceived control, such as access to lower prices (Gasparin *et al.*, 2022). For instance, Gasparin *et al.* (2022) note that customers often expect variations among touchpoints, which do not necessarily impair experience. Neslin (2022) similarly argues that price uniformity does not inherently enhance satisfaction, given price sensitivity and switching costs. These divergent findings indicate that the effects of channel disintegration merit closer examination.

Zhang *et al.* (2018) conceptualize channel integration as six dimensions: (1) integrated promotion, (2) integrated product and price, (3) integrated transaction information, (4) integrated information access, (5) integrated order fulfilment, and (6) integrated customer service. The first two relate to the marketing mix, while the latter four involve service and information. Integrated promotion denotes consistent presentation of monetary (e.g. discounts) and non-monetary (e.g. loyalty points) incentives; integrated product and price refer to uniform product availability and pricing. Integrated transaction information enables single-account tracking; integrated information access supports efficient search; integrated fulfilment ensures flexible completion; and integrated customer service unifies communication (Cheah *et al.*, 2020). The overarching goal is to maximize consistency and accessibility across touchpoints.

This study focuses on two dimensions proposed by Zhang *et al.* (2018), integrated promotion and integrated product and price, for three reasons. First, promotional and pricing elements are directly tied to perceived transaction value (Hua *et al.*, 2025) and thus exert greater influence on decision making than operational dimensions such as fulfilment. Evaluated at the pre-purchase stage, they are also more salient and emotionally charged (Neslin, 2022).

Second, while consistent services across touchpoints enhance convenience, inconsistencies can increase flexibility and autonomy (Gasparin *et al.*, 2022). Shopping is not purely utilitarian; variations in promotions and pricing stimulate deal seeking and heighten hedonic value (Belwal *et al.*, 2025). By enabling cross-channel comparisons, such variations enrich the experience and provide satisfaction from deal-seeking behaviours (Gasparin *et al.*, 2022). Thus, disintegration may serve as a strategic lever rather than a service failure.

Third, algorithmic pricing exposes customers to dynamic promotions and individualized strategies (Grewal *et al.*, 2020). These tactics, tailored to channels or devices, make inconsistencies in promotion and pricing more conspicuous. In contrast, operational elements such as fulfilment usually occur post-purchase and are standardized. Focussing on promotion and product/price therefore captures aspects of disintegration that are both frequent in practice and psychologically consequential.

2.2 Surprise effect

Surprise is defined as “astonishment, wonder, or amazement” in response to unexpected stimuli (Valenzuela *et al.*, 2010), which often elicit strong emotional reactions (Shibly and Chatterjee, 2020). Although affectively neutral, surprise may produce positive or negative outcomes (Ortony *et al.*, 1988). Emotional assessments shape customer evaluations throughout the decision journey (Tueanrat *et al.*, 2021). Delight, a positive affective state, arises when unexpected benefits or values are perceived (Ariffin and Omar, 2016). Arousal and pleasure are its core components. Accordingly, this study examines the influence of surprise, particularly delight, on satisfaction.

2.3 Shopping motivations

Shopping motivations have been widely studied. Büttner *et al.* (2013) classify consumers as goal-oriented shoppers, who prioritize efficiency, and experiential shoppers, who seek

enjoyment. [Aw \(2019\)](#) extends this by identifying three activity-based motivations: efficiency shopping, bargain hunting, and variety seeking. Following [Aw \(2019\)](#), this study adopts this tripartite classification to examine how shopping motivation moderates the relationship between disintegration-induced surprise and emotional outcomes. Efficiency shopping emphasizes fast, effortless experiences ([Wagner and Rudolph, 2010](#)). Bargain hunting involves pursuing discounts and attractive prices ([Wagner and Rudolph, 2010](#)). Variety seeking reflects a preference for novelty, avoiding monotony, and maximizing stimulation ([Gupta et al., 2020](#)).

3. Development of hypotheses

The surprise effect arises when individuals encounter stimuli that deviate from established cognitive schemas ([Vanhamme, 2000](#)). Congruent stimuli enhance cognitive processing and integration, whereas incongruent inputs elicit surprise ([Ozer et al., 2020](#)). Such schema-inconsistent events initiate attribution processes as individuals resolve expectancy–disconfirmation ([Gendolla, 1997](#)). In omnichannel retailing, promotional inconsistencies particularly trigger surprise when content is not uniformly integrated.

H1. Inconsistent promotion exerts an influence on surprise.

In an omnichannel environment, customers actively compare product attributes and prices across touchpoints, and event salience intensifies ([Grobert et al., 2016](#)). Customers often tolerate inconsistencies, engaging in behaviours such as webrooming to optimize choices ([Gasparin et al., 2022](#)). Channel differences help secure better deals or assortments. Marketing strategies may also create surprise through exclusive discounts or channel-specific products.

H2. Inconsistent product and price exerts an influence on surprise.

Surprise often arises from schema discrepancies, when customers encounter unexpected product features or promotional formats. Expectation moderates this effect ([Sai Vijay et al., 2025](#)). For example, an advertisement on an unusual platform may heighten attentional salience ([Ozer et al., 2020](#)). In omnichannel contexts, customers expect uniform promotions; thus, unexpected offers elicit surprise. When expectations are low, the impact of inconsistency becomes stronger.

H3. The absence of anticipation moderates the relationship between inconsistent promotion and surprise.

Unexpected price variations create uncertainty, prompting affective and cognitive processing ([Kovacheva et al., 2022](#)). When customers expect price consistency but find lower prices or broader assortments in certain channels, they experience greater surprise. Discrepancies beyond expectations amplify this effect, with lower anticipation further intensifying it.

H4. The absence of anticipation moderates the relationship of inconsistent product and price with surprise.

Surprise is a valence-neutral state that heightens sensitivity to subsequent stimuli ([Kim and Mattila, 2013](#)). When encountering surprise, customers evaluate outcomes to determine favorability ([Ariffin and Omar, 2016](#)). Positive outcomes, such as unexpected benefits or lower prices, amplify favourable emotions ([Kovacheva et al., 2022](#)). [Gupta et al. \(2020\)](#) also contend that surprise yields hedonic benefits that foster positive emotions.

This study emphasizes the positive side of surprise, as shopping offers psychological benefits rather than risks ([Gardner and Rook, 1988](#)). Purchasing restores a sense of control, enhancing positive affect ([Rick et al., 2014](#)). Unplanned purchases evoke pleasure, extending from retail therapy, which frames consumption as affective self-regulation ([Zulauf and Wagner, 2022](#)). Accordingly, channel disintegration may induce surprise when expectations are violated. When such deviations are appraised positively, surprise becomes a catalyst for delight.

H5. Surprise exerts a positive effect on delight.

The emotional impact of surprise is not always symmetrical (Kim and Mattila, 2010). Whether it evokes pleasant or unpleasant emotions depends on context (Alden *et al.*, 2000). Customers with strong efficiency-driven motivation perceive shopping as more satisfying when convenient and streamlined (Cocco and Demoulin, 2022). They seek to minimize cognitive and time effort, preferring consistent service across touchpoints (Geng and Ning, 2025). High efficiency motivation reflects a stronger desire for convenience; thus, disintegrated marketing mix strategies may frustrate these customers. Consequently, the positive effect of surprise on delight may be weakened when efficiency motivation is high.

H6. Efficient shopping weakens the relationship between surprise and delight.

Bargain hunting is a price-driven strategy in which customers compare products across channels to find discounts (Kang, 2018). These consumers view themselves as savvy shoppers who gain satisfaction not only from savings but also from deal discovery (Aw, 2019). Lee *et al.* (2013) note that price-sensitive shoppers often enjoy dynamic pricing, such as bidding, which mimics a treasure-hunt. Horváth and Adigüzel (2018) find that sales promotions heighten excitement and engagement among bargain hunters. Motivated by price differences, these customers exploit cross-channel inconsistencies. When comparisons yield financial gain, the surprise may be positively appraised and lead to delight.

H7. Bargain hunting strengthens the relationship between surprise and delight.

Variety-seeking behaviour reflects a preference for novelty, change, and stimulation (Gupta *et al.*, 2020). Variety seekers enjoy exploring unfamiliar products, following trends, and engaging with new experiences (Belwal *et al.*, 2025). Lee *et al.* (2013) note that novelty adds excitement and a sense of adventure to shopping. In this study, disintegrated experiences meet their desire for change. When consumers encounter surprise through an unexpected promotion or expanded product range, the emotional reaction is more likely to be positive.

H8. Variety seeking strengthens the relationship between surprise and delight.

Satisfaction is a psychological state shaped by cumulative consumption experiences (Vanhamme, 2000). Emotions strongly influence evaluative judgements (Wu *et al.*, 2015). Positive moods enhance satisfaction, and surprise-induced delight further strengthens it (Tueanrat *et al.*, 2021). Kim and Mattila (2010) contend that affective responses shape cognitive evaluations. Thus, customers delighted by an inconsistent channel marketing mix evaluate the retailer more favourably.

H9. Delight exerts a positive influence on satisfaction.

Within-firm lock-in refers to a firm's ability to retain consumers across the search and purchase stages in a multichannel environment (Neslin *et al.*, 2006). It captures continued interaction with the same retailer across channels, even when switching occurs (Maggioni *et al.*, 2020). Because this study focuses on channel disintegration rather than brand-level loyalty, within-firm lock-in is a more relevant measure of cross-channel behaviour. Vendor lock-in reflects a firm's capacity to reduce switching and foster retention (Chiu *et al.*, 2011). Prior research consistently supports the positive link between satisfaction and retention (Le and Nguyen-Le, 2021). Thus, satisfied customers are more likely to repurchase from the same vendor, regardless of channel.

H10. Satisfaction exerts a positive influence on vendor lock-in.

Positive affect serves as heuristic input shaping evaluative judgements and purchase behaviour (Heilman *et al.*, 2002). A good mood narrows decision scope and encourages spending (Xu, 2020). Delighted customers favour the retailer and show reduced switching. Xu (2020) also finds that positive emotions increase favourable online reviews. Thus, customers delighted by the service experience are inclined to remain loyal.

H11. Delight exerts a positive influence on vendor lock-in.

4. Methodology

4.1 Measures

Relevant literature informed the measures, which were adapted to the study's context. Accuracy of item wording in both English and Chinese versions was verified through back translation. All constructs, except delight, were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Delight was measured with a 5-point semantic differential scale anchored by opposite descriptors. Sex and demographic questions were multiple-choice. The [Appendix](#) lists all measurement items and sources.

4.2 Research setting and data collection

Data were collected from customers of UNIQLO and GU in Taiwan, two apparel brands under an advanced omnichannel framework integrating mobile apps, physical stores, and social media. UNIQLO, which entered Taiwan in 2010, is the apparel market leader with 90% brand awareness ([Wang and Wan, 2020](#)) and operated 75 stores nationwide by 2023, sustaining growth even during COVID-19 ([Cheng, 2023](#)). GU entered in 2014 and has since become the brand's largest overseas market, reaching 23 stores in 2024. Its Taiwan sales quadrupled over the past decade, including a 200% rise in the last three years ([Bhasin, 2024](#)). Together, UNIQLO and GU, both under Fast Retailing, hold strong market influence.

Both UNIQLO and GU are well-established omnichannel retailers with advanced integration across multiple channels. While they provide seamless transitions between touchpoints, they also adopt selective differentiation strategies. Inconsistencies remain in product availability, pricing, and transactional procedures. For example, channel-exclusive items, price variations, or returns limited to the original channel. Such practices create perceptible inconsistencies within an otherwise integrated structure, making UNIQLO and GU suitable contexts for investigating intentional channel disintegration in a mature omnichannel environment.

After designing the questionnaire, feedback was obtained from three apparel industry experts and two e-commerce professors. A pilot test with 40 MBA students assessed reliability and validity, and minor adjustments improved clarity. The target respondents were customers who had shopped at UNIQLO or GU within the past six months. Convenience sampling was employed, and data were collected through a two-wave online survey using SurveyCake, distributed via omnichannel shopping and fast fashion forums and fan pages on Facebook and Instagram. To ensure data quality, three screening procedures were applied. First, respondents confirmed interaction with at least two brand touchpoints (e.g. mobile apps, stores) and one purchase within six months. Second, attention check questions (e.g. "Have you purchased from UNIQLO or GU in the past six months?") identified inattentive responses. Third, incomplete responses or uniform patterns (e.g. straight-lining) were excluded.

The questionnaire emphasized actual shopping experiences rather than hypothetical scenarios. Respondents recalled and reported perceived inconsistencies across brand touchpoints, such as (1) price discrepancies between online and offline channels (e.g. an item discounted online but sold at full price in-store), (2) product availability mismatches (e.g. exclusive items only online or in-store), and (3) promotional variations (e.g. app-exclusive coupons or store-only discounts). Participants completed the survey based on these experiences. To incentivize participation, the study pledged a NT\$10 charity donation per valid response and offered NT\$800 in cash prize drawings.

The survey ran from September 1, 2023, to January 5, 2024. The first wave measured incongruence, surprise, and emotion. Of 540 invited participants, 521 provided valid responses. Three months later, the same participants were invited to assess satisfaction and vendor lock-in. To verify responses, participants provided purchase records or described their shopping experiences, and responses were matched by email to ensure anonymity. Ultimately, 450 joined the second wave, and after excluding 16 incomplete cases, 434 valid responses remained. Female respondents (65.3%) outnumbered males. Most were under 30 years old (42.1%), followed by ages 31–40 (21.5%). Additionally, 62.2% held a bachelor's degree, and 19.6% a graduate degree.

5. Results

5.1 Measurement model

This study used partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to test the hypotheses. PLS-SEM was selected as it estimates complex models with moderator variables (Becker *et al.*, 2012). After preliminary screening, measurement reliability and validity were assessed. As shown in Table 1, three items with low standardized loadings (<0.50) were

Table 1. Factor loadings and reliability

Construct	Loading	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Inconsistent promotion		0.78	0.86	0.60
IP1	0.75			
IP2	deleted			
IP3	0.82			
IP4	0.73			
IP5	0.80			
Inconsistent price and product		0.84	0.88	0.60
PP1	0.80			
PP2	0.80			
PP3	0.78			
PP4	0.77			
PP5	0.75			
Absence of anticipation		0.83	0.90	0.74
AN1	0.89			
AN2	0.88			
AN3	0.83			
Surprise		0.91	0.94	0.84
SU1	0.92			
SU2	0.94			
SU3	0.90			
Delight		0.95	0.97	0.91
DE1	0.94			
DE2	0.96			
DE3	0.96			
Satisfaction		0.61	0.82	0.69
SA1	0.74			
SA2	0.90			
SA3	0.67			
Vendor lock-in		0.89	0.93	0.82
IA1	deleted			
IA2	0.90			
IA3	0.91			
IA4	0.88			
Efficiency shopping		0.88	0.91	0.74
ES1	0.84			
ES2	0.87			
ES3	0.89			
ES4	0.83			
Bargain hunting		0.86	0.90	0.70
BH1	0.79			
BH2	0.90			
BH3	0.86			
BH4	0.79			
Variety seeking		0.84	0.89	0.74
VS1	0.85			
VS2	deleted			
VS3	0.79			
VS4	0.93			

removed: one from inconsistent promotion (IP2), one from vendor lock-in (IA1), and one from variety seeking (VS2). The remaining items adequately captured their constructs, and all retained items loaded significantly, with Cronbach’s α above 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2017).

Content validity was ensured by aligning items with prior literature. Convergent validity was supported when each construct’s composite reliability (CR) exceeded 0.7 and its average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.5. Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) and the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT). As shown in Table 2, each construct’s square root of AVE was higher than its correlations with other constructs, and HTMT values remained below the 0.8 threshold.

5.2 Structural model

Figure 1 illustrates the indirect influence of channel disintegration on vendor lock-in through surprise, emotional response, and satisfaction. Inconsistent product and price positively affected surprise ($\beta = 0.12, p < 0.05$), but inconsistent promotion did not ($\beta = 0.02, p > 0.05$); thus, H₂ was supported, but H₁ was not. Surprise positively influenced delight ($\beta = 0.34, p < 0.001$), which in turn enhanced satisfaction ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.001$). Satisfaction significantly affected vendor lock-in ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.001$), whereas delight’s direct effect on lock-in was nonsignificant ($\beta = 0.12, p > 0.05$). Hence, H₅, H₉, and H₁₀ were supported, but H₁₁ was not.

Table 2. Correlations among major constructs

Variable	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)
(a) Inconsistent promotion	0.77	0.75	0.69	0.32	0.20	0.29	0.75	0.74	0.31	0.32
(b) Inconsistent product and price	0.62	0.77	0.56	0.37	0.10	0.28	0.75	0.71	0.36	0.33
(c) Absence of anticipation	0.55	0.48	0.86	0.50	0.07	0.22	0.68	0.58	0.34	0.54
(d) Surprise	0.27	0.34	0.44	0.92	0.26	0.28	0.48	0.49	0.41	0.72
(e) Delight	0.18	0.05	0.06	0.24	0.95	0.28	0.20	0.19	0.23	0.19
(f) Satisfaction	0.14	0.13	0.12	0.23	0.26	0.83	0.32	0.31	0.23	0.38
(g) Vendor lock-in	0.27	0.29	0.47	0.64	0.17	0.30	0.91	0.75	0.34	0.48
(h) Efficiency shopping	0.62	0.66	0.57	0.42	0.18	0.17	0.41	0.86	0.35	0.47
(i) Bargain hunting	0.60	0.60	0.49	0.43	0.18	0.15	0.41	0.66	0.84	0.32
(j) Variety seeking	0.21	0.27	0.26	0.36	0.25	−0.18	0.27	0.25	0.26	0.86

Note(s): Diagonal elements are the square root of AVE of the reflective scales. Off-diagonal elements are correlations between construct. Above the diagonal element are the HTMT value

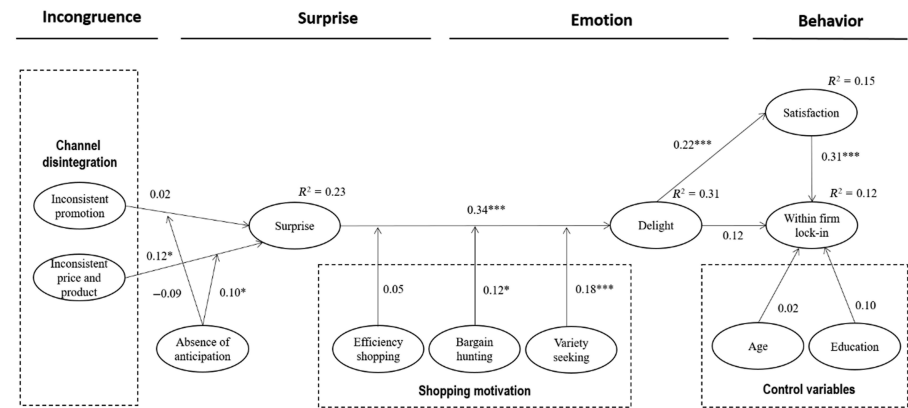


Figure 1. Results for the proposed model. Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Moderating effects were tested using the product-indicator approach in SmartPLS 4, which constructs latent interaction terms by multiplying indicators of the independent and moderator variables (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Results showed that absence of anticipation moderated the effect of inconsistent product and price ($\beta = 0.10, p < 0.05$), supporting H4 but not H3. Bargain hunting ($\beta = 0.12, p < 0.05$) and variety seeking ($\beta = 0.18, p < 0.001$) strengthened delight's effect on satisfaction, supporting H7 and H8. Efficiency shopping did not moderate the surprise–satisfaction link ($\beta = 0.05, p > 0.05$), so H6 was not supported. The model explained 23% of variance in surprise, 31% in delight, 15% in satisfaction, and 12% in vendor lock-in.

To further examine the significant results of H4, H7, and H8, a multi-group analysis (MGA) was conducted. MGA compares structural path coefficients across subgroups defined by moderator levels (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2011). Following Sparks *et al.* (1998), participants were classified into high (one standard deviation above the mean) and low (one below) groups based on absence of anticipation and shopping motivation (bargain hunting and variety seeking). This approach tested whether higher levels of these moderators strengthened the relationships.

As shown in Table 3, the link between inconsistent product/price and surprise was stronger for high absence of anticipation than for low ($\beta_{\text{high}} = 0.554, p < 0.001$; $\beta_{\text{low}} = 0.049, p > 0.05$; $p < 0.05$). For shopping motivation, the effect of surprise on delight was stronger for high vs. low bargain hunting ($\beta_{\text{high}} = 0.575, p < 0.001$; $\beta_{\text{low}} = -0.281, p > 0.05$; $p < 0.001$). Similarly, surprise more strongly influenced delight under high variety seeking than low ($\beta_{\text{high}} = 0.475, p < 0.001$; $\beta_{\text{low}} = -0.257, p > 0.05$; $p < 0.001$).

6. Discussions and conclusions

6.1 Research findings

Inconsistent pricing and product assortment significantly impact surprise. Customers encountering a broader product range or lower prices across channels experience positive or negative surprise. This supports prior findings by Gasparin *et al.* (2022), who argue that certain inconsistencies enhance customer experience through perceived control and novelty. However, inconsistent promotions did not significantly affect surprise in this study. One possible explanation is that promotional discrepancies may be perceived as unfair or manipulative rather than rewarding. According to fairness perception theory, consumers evaluate whether they are treated equitably, particularly in contexts involving pricing or service delivery (Xia *et al.*, 2004). For instance, when a brand offers a web-exclusive flash sale with substantial discounts but no equivalent offer in-store, customers who shop offline may perceive the tactic as coercive. Such experiences are more likely to evoke distrust than surprise, suggesting that not all types of inconsistency trigger surprise.

Additionally, the absence of anticipation did not moderate the relationship between inconsistent promotion and surprise. As Hayes (2018) suggests, moderation typically operates by conditioning an existing effect; when the baseline relationship is weak, the potential for moderation is inherently constrained. As promotional inconsistency had no significant effect on surprise, the absence of anticipation offered limited explanatory value.

Table 3. Results of the multi-group analysis

Moderator	Path	Path coefficient		High—low significant difference	
		High	Low	t	p
Absence of anticipation	Inconsistent product and price→Surprise	0.554***	0.049	2.392	<0.05
Bargain hunting	Surprise→Delight	0.575***	−0.281	4.271	<0.001
Variety seeking	Surprise→Delight	0.475***	−0.257	3.836	<0.001

Note(s): * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$, ns = not significant

This study also confirms the link between surprise and delight. Surprise, initially neutral, can evolve into a positive emotion (Kim and Mattila, 2013). The degree of delight depends on shopping motivations. Cost-oriented customers perceive surprise positively, as it enables them to secure better deals. Inconsistent channels encourage price comparisons, increasing perceived control. Variety seekers, who pursue novelty and self-expression (Horváth and Adigüzel, 2018), also respond positively, as channel disintegration provides the variety they desire. This aligns with Grobert *et al.* (2016), who argue that surprise's emotional impact depends on perceived benefits. Contrary to expectations, efficiency shopping did not moderate the surprise–delight relationship. Efficiency-oriented shoppers may view surprises as inconvenient, preferring seamless experiences.

Finally, this study found that positive emotions enhance satisfaction, contributing to vendor lock-in. These findings align with Wu *et al.* (2015), who highlight emotions' role in service evaluations. Satisfaction is a key determinant of long-term customer behaviour. Thus, pricing and product inconsistencies can strengthen vendor lock-in by mediating surprise's influence on emotions.

6.2 Theoretical implications

This study differs from existing research in two significant ways. First, while previous research emphasizes integrated marketing mix elements in creating a seamless customer journey (Lin *et al.*, 2023), Gasparin *et al.* (2022) challenge this fully integrative view. They propose that selective inconsistencies may improve customer experiences under certain conditions. However, their framework lacks empirical validation. This study demonstrates how specific forms of channel disintegration, namely promotional and product and price inconsistencies, elicit emotional responses. By introducing surprise as a mediator, this study explains how such inconsistencies trigger vendor lock-in. This study responds to Gasparin *et al.*'s (2022) recommendation: “a number of studies have concentrated mainly on dedication factors, such as user satisfaction and affective commitment, but the dedication perspective alone is not able to fully capture users' post-adoption decision-making processes” (p. 9).

Second, this study advances understanding of the valence of surprise, which is often treated as neutral but under-theorized in terms of its emotional outcomes (Grobert *et al.*, 2016). While prior research has typically examined the direct effect of surprise on emotion (e.g. Gupta *et al.*, 2020), this study shows that shopping motivation moderates the surprise-emotion relationship. Specifically, the moderating roles of efficiency-oriented shopping, bargain hunting, and variety seeking are examined to account for contextual differences in emotional responses to disintegrated experiences. This study offers insight into the contextual and motivational determinants of surprise valence, addressing Grobert *et al.*'s (2016) assertion that “whether surprise can be positive, neutral, or negative is unclear” (p. 240).

6.3 Managerial implications

Omnichannel retailing integrates multiple channels to enhance the customer experience, yet maintaining consistency in pricing, product assortment, and transactions remains a challenge. When inconsistencies are perceived as opportunities rather than errors, they enhance customers' sense of control. Retailers are advised to adopt a strategic disintegration approach. Rather than striving for full standardization, firms can purposefully vary channel offerings based on behavioural insights. For example, “invisible” assortment strategies, such as restricting certain products to logged-in members, cultivate perceived exclusivity while avoiding overt inconsistencies. Furthermore, disintegration should be context-sensitive. Real-world examples include ZARA's online-exclusive product launches or Nike's differentiated availability across mobile apps and stores. Managers should monitor customer responses using behavioural analytics to fine-tune the degree of inconsistency without compromising brand trust.

Surprise functions as a high-impact marketing stimulus. As a valence-neutral, short-lived emotional state, it presents both opportunities and risks. To convert surprise into loyalty, firms

must design it to align with customer expectations and context. Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies offer promising tools for this purpose. For instance, computer vision generates personalized recommendations based on image inputs, while AI-driven dynamic pricing and gamified content, deliver micro-surprises at various stages of the customer journey.

For bargain-oriented and variety-seeking customers, surprise is often welcomed, especially when linked to unexpected promotions or novel offerings. Retailers should regard shopping motivation as a core segmentation variable in designing disintegration-based strategies. Rather than applying uniform tactics, firms can utilize customer data, such as membership status, to classify customers based on behavioural traits. This enables the delivery of personalized, context-aware omnichannel experiences. A segmentation-based approach ensures operational efficiency, enhancing overall customer satisfaction.

6.4 Study limitations and directions for future research

While the empirical findings offer valuable implications for multichannel strategy development, several limitations should be acknowledged, each of which opens avenues for future research. First, although UNIQLO and GU were appropriate representatives of a mature omnichannel retail environment, the sample was limited to Taiwanese consumers, with a demographic skew toward female respondents (65.3%), limiting generalizability. Future research should include more demographically and culturally diverse samples.

Second, this study focuses on how channel disintegration influences vendor lock-in via the mediating role of surprise but does not explicitly integrate fairness-related frameworks. Constructs such as fairness and equity provide insight into consumers' evaluations of disintegrated experiences (Gao *et al.*, 2020). Future studies could examine perceived fairness as a mediator or moderator. Third, this study conceptualizes surprise primarily as a positive emotion, which may not capture the full range of reactions. Disintegrated experiences may also evoke frustration. Future research should adopt experimental designs to reflect the full spectrum of emotions.

Fourth, the generalizability of the surprise-based mechanism depends on product type and purchase context. Effects are likely more pronounced in hedonic or high-involvement purchases, whereas for utilitarian products convenience may dominate. Future research should examine how product characteristics moderate outcomes. Fifth, this study is confined to business-to-consumer settings. In business-to-business environments, where purchases are rational, contract-driven, and involve multiple stakeholders, surprise may be seen as disruptive. Future research should explore how surprise operates in these contexts. Finally, although the study identifies a significant pathway from surprise to vendor lock-in, the explained variance is relatively low ($R^2 = 12\%$), suggesting omitted variables. Future research could incorporate affective and cognitive antecedents of retention, as well as contextual factors such as market saturation.

(The Appendix follows overleaf)

Appendix

Table A1. Study questionnaire

Channel disintegration (adapted from [Chen and Chi, 2021](#))

Inconsistent Promotion

IP1 The retailer's physical store and website have an inconsistent brand name, slogan, and logo

IP2* The retailer's website highlights in-store promotions not offered in the physical store

IP3 The retailer's website does not provide the address and contact information of the physical store

IP4 The retailer's physical store does not advertise its website through pamphlets, receipts, and bags in its physical store

IP5 The retailer's website does not publish advertisements in the physical store, through emails, or on the website and social media platforms

Inconsistent Price and Product Assortment

PP1 The apparel retailer has inconsistent product descriptions in the physical store and website

PP2 The apparel retailer has inconsistent product classifications in both its physical store and on its website

PP3 The apparel retailer has inconsistent information on stock availability in both the physical store and the website

PP4 The apparel retailer has inconsistent product prices in both the physical store and on the website

PP5 The apparel retailer has inconsistent discounts in both the physical store and website

Absence of anticipation (adapted from (Noordewier and Breugelmans, 2013))

AN1 The product or service offerings of the retailer are unpredictable

AN2 The inconsistent product or service offerings of the retailer occur suddenly

AN3 The product or service offerings of the retailer are unexpected

Surprise (adapted from (Kim and Mattila, 2013))

SU1 I am surprised by the products or services offered by the retailer

SU2 I am astonished by the products or services offered by the retailer

SU3 I am amazed by the products or services offered by the retailer

Delight (adapted from (Barnes et al., 2016))

Based on the retailer's strategies, how often do you feel ...

DE1 Elated

DE2 Delight

DE3 Gleeful

Satisfaction (adapted from (Chang and Li, 2022))

SA1 Overall, I am satisfied with the goods and services offered by the retailer

SA2 Overall, I am happy shopping with this retailer

SA3 Overall, my choice to shop with this retailer has been wise

Vendor Lock-in (adapted from (Chiu et al., 2011))

IA1*I have no trouble switching between firms

IA2 I do not like switching to another firm after I have spent time searching a retailer's website

IA3 I am committed to this retailer

IA4 I feel loyalty toward this retailer

Shopping Motivation

Efficiency Shopping (adapted from (Wagner and Rudolph, 2010))

ES1 I want to shop in an efficient manner

ES2 I want to acquire exactly what I desire in the least amount of time

ES3 I want to shop quickly and easily

ES4 I want to have an effortless shopping process

Bargain Hunting (adapted from (Wagner and Rudolph, 2010))

BH1 I want to have an effortless shopping process

BH2 I want to look for discounts

BH3 I want to purchase products at the lowest price I can find

BH4 I want to take advantage of a sale

Variety Seeking (adapted from (Ozen and Nil, 2014))

VS1 I want to shop to stay up-to-date with trends

VS2*I want to shop to stay up-to-date with new fashions. (R)

VS3 I want to shop to gain new experiences

VS4 I want to shop to see what new products are available

Note(s): * indicates items that were deleted from the main study because their loadings were small and nonsignificant; (R) indicates reverse items

References

- Alden, D.L., Mukherjee, A. and Hoyer, W.D. (2000), "The effects of incongruity, surprise and positive moderators on perceived humor in television advertising", *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 29 No. 2, pp. 1-15, doi: [10.1080/00913367.2000.10673605](https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2000.10673605).
- Ariffin, A.A.M. and Omar, N.B. (2016), "Surprise, hospitality, and customer delight in the context of hotel services", in Kozak, M. and Kozak, N. (Eds), *Advances in Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, Emerald Group Publishing Ltd, Vol. 12, pp. 127-142.
- Aw, E.C.-X. (2019), "Understanding the webrooming phenomenon: shopping motivation, channel-related benefits and costs", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 47 No. 10, pp. 1074-1092, [10.1108/ijrdm-01-2019-0026](https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-01-2019-0026).
- Barnes, D.C., Collier, J.E., Howe, V. and Hoffman, K.D. (2016), "Multiple paths to customer delight: the impact of effort, expertise and tangibles on joy and surprise", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 30 No. 3, pp. 277-289.
- Becker, J.M., Klein, K. and Wetzels, M. (2012), "Hierarchical latent variable models in PLS SEM: guidelines for using reflective-formative type models", *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 45 Nos 5-6, pp. 359-394, doi: [10.1016/j.lrp.2012.10.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2012.10.001).
- Belwal, R., Belwal, S., Morgan, Z. and Al Badi, L.H. (2025), "Profiling consumers for their shopping motivations in modern retail formats in Oman", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 53 No. 1, pp. 74-93, doi: [10.1108/ijrdm-09-2023-0581](https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-09-2023-0581).
- Bhasin, H. (2024), "Marketing strategy of uniqlo - uniqlo marketing strategy", [Online]. Marketing91. available at: <https://www.marketing91.com/marketing-strategy-of-uniqlo/>
- Büttner, O.B., Florack, A. and Göritz, A.S. (2013), "Shopping orientation and mindsets: how motivation influences consumer information processing during shopping", *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 30 No. 9, pp. 779-793, doi: [10.1002/mar.20645](https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20645).
- Casteran, G., Acquatella, F., Jolivet, V. and Hlady-Rispal, M. (2023), "Goal congruence and shopping motivation influence for in-store mobile app", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 51 No. 11, pp. 1533-1551, doi: [10.1108/ijrdm-12-2022-0519](https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-12-2022-0519).
- Chang, Y. and Geng, L. (2022), "Planned or unplanned purchases? The effects of perceived values on omnichannel continuance intention", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 50 No. 12, pp. 1535-1551, doi: [10.1108/ijrdm-01-2021-0012](https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-01-2021-0012).
- Cheah, J.H., Lim, X.J., Ting, H., Liu, Y. and Quach, S. (2020), "Are privacy concerns still relevant? Revisiting consumer behaviour in omnichannel retailing", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 65, 102242, doi: [10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102242](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102242).
- Chen, Y. and Chi, T. (2021), "How does channel integration affect consumers' selection of omnichannel shopping methods? An empirical study of U.S. consumers", *Sustainability*, Vol. 13 No. 16, pp. 8983-9012.
- Cheng, Y. (2023), "UNIQLO sells cooling apparel year-round in Taiwan, leading global sales! how has Japanese fast fashion captured Taiwanese consumers?", *FC Future Commerce*, available at: <https://today.line.me/tw/v2/article/Qw33XBG>
- Chiu, H.C., Hsieh, Y.C., Roan, J., Tseng, K.J. and Hsieh, J.K. (2011), "The challenge for multichannel services: Cross-channel free-riding behavior", *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 268-277, doi: [10.1016/j.elerap.2010.07.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2010.07.002).
- Cocco, H. and Demoulin, N.T. (2022), "Designing a seamless shopping journey through omnichannel retailer integration", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 150, pp. 461-475, doi: [10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.06.031](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.06.031).
- Djofack, S., Nkene Ndeme, R. and Fosso Wamba, S. (2023), "Assessing omnichannel strategies for global retailing industries in a developing country", *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 655-668, doi: [10.1080/0965254x.2021.1963313](https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254x.2021.1963313).

- Fornell, C. and Larcker, D.F. (1981), "Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 39-50, doi: [10.2307/3151312](https://doi.org/10.2307/3151312).
- Gao, M. and Huang, L. (2021), "Quality of channel integration and customer loyalty in omnichannel retailing: the mediating role of customer engagement and relationship program receptiveness", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 63, 102688, doi: [10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102688](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102688).
- Gao, L., Melero, I. and Sese, F.J. (2020), "Multichannel integration along the customer journey: a systematic review and research agenda", *Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 40 Nos 15-16, pp. 1087-1118, doi: [10.1080/02642069.2019.1652600](https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2019.1652600).
- Gardner, M.P. and Rook, D.W. (1988), "Effects of impulse purchases on consumers' affective states", Houston, M.J., *Advances in Consumer Research*, Association for Consumer Research, Provo, UT, pp. 127-130.
- Gasparin, I., Panina, E., Becker, L., Yrjölä, M., Jaakkola, E. and Pizzutti, C. (2022), "Challenging the "integration imperative": a customer perspective on omnichannel journeys", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 64, 102829, doi: [10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102829](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102829).
- Gendolla, G.H. (1997), "Surprise in the context of achievement: the role of outcome valence and importance", *Motivation and Emotion*, Vol. 21 No. 2, pp. 165-193, doi: [10.1023/a:1024486617134](https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1024486617134).
- Geng, L. and Ning, P. (2025), "Omnichannel recommendations or single-channel recommendations? The role of inter-channel self-consistency", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 53 No. 6, pp. 500-521.
- Grewal, D., Hulland, J., Kopalle, P.K. and Karahanna, E. (2020), "The future of technology and marketing: a multidisciplinary perspective", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 48, pp. 1-8, doi: [10.1007/s11747-019-00711-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00711-4).
- Grobert, J., Cuny, C. and Fornerino, M. (2016), "Surprise! we changed the logo", *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 239-246, doi: [10.1108/jpbm-06-2015-0895](https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-06-2015-0895).
- Gupta, A., Eilert, M. and Gentry, J.W. (2020), "Can I surprise myself? A conceptual framework of surprise self-gifting among consumers", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 54, 101712, doi: [10.1016/j.jretconser.2018.11.017](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2018.11.017).
- Hair, J.F., Hult, G.T.M., Ringle, C.M. and Sarstedt, M. (2017), *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)*, Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- Hayes, A.F. (2018), *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: a Regression-based Approach*, The Guilford Press, New York, NY.
- Heilman, C.M., Nakamoto, K. and Rao, A.G. (2002), "Pleasant surprises: consumer response to unexpected in-store coupons", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 39 No. 2, pp. 242-252, doi: [10.1509/jmkr.39.2.242.19081](https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.39.2.242.19081).
- Horváth, C. and Adigüzel, F. (2018), "Shopping enjoyment to the extreme: Hedonic shopping motivations and compulsive buying in developed and emerging markets", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 86, pp. 300-310, doi: [10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.07.013](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.07.013).
- Hua, H., Wang, W. and Wang, H. (2025), "Research on the customer responses to Omni-channel: heterogeneity of channel integration modes", *Electronic Commerce Research*, doi: [10.1007/s10660-025-09955-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10660-025-09955-5).
- Kang, J.-Y.M. (2018), "Showrooming, webrooming, and user-generated content creation in the omnichannel era", *Journal of Internet Commerce*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 145-169, doi: [10.1080/15332861.2018.1433907](https://doi.org/10.1080/15332861.2018.1433907).
- Kim, H.-J. and Han, S.M. (2023), "Uncovering the reasons behind consumers' shift from online to offline shopping", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 37 No. 9, pp. 1201-1217, doi: [10.1108/jsm-02-2023-0060](https://doi.org/10.1108/jsm-02-2023-0060).
- Kim, M.G. and Mattila, A.S. (2010), "The impact of mood states and surprise cues on satisfaction", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 432-436, doi: [10.1016/j.ijhm.2009.10.022](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2009.10.022).

- Kim, M.G. and Mattila, A.S. (2013), "Does a surprise strategy need words? The effect of explanations for a surprise strategy on customer delight and expectations", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 27 No. 5, pp. 361-370, doi: [10.1108/jsm-01-2012-0008](https://doi.org/10.1108/jsm-01-2012-0008).
- Kim, S., Shin, W. and Kim, H.W. (2024), "Predicting online customer purchase: the integration of customer characteristics and browsing patterns", *Decision Support Systems*, Vol. 177, 114105, doi: [10.1016/j.dss.2023.114105](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2023.114105).
- Kovacheva, A., Nikolova, H. and Lamberton, C. (2022), "Will he buy a surprise? Gender differences in the purchase of surprise offerings", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 98 No. 4, pp. 667-684, doi: [10.1016/j.jretai.2022.04.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2022.04.002).
- Lazaris, C., Sarantopoulos, P., Vrechopoulos, A. and Doukidis, G. (2021), "Effects of increased omnichannel integration on customer satisfaction and loyalty intentions", *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, Vol. 25 No. 4, pp. 440-468, doi: [10.1080/10864415.2021.1967005](https://doi.org/10.1080/10864415.2021.1967005).
- Le, A.N.H. and Nguyen-Le, X.D. (2021), "A moderated mediating mechanism of omnichannel customer experiences", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 49 No. 5, pp. 595-615, doi: [10.1108/ijrdm-02-2020-0054](https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-02-2020-0054).
- Lee, M.Y., Kim, Y.K. and Lee, H.J. (2013), "Adventure versus gratification: emotional shopping in online auctions", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 47 Nos 1/2, pp. 49-70, doi: [10.1108/03090561311285457](https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561311285457).
- Lin, S.W., Huang, E.Y. and Cheng, K.T. (2023), "A binding tie: why do customers stick to omnichannel retailers?", *Information Technology and People*, Vol. 36 No. 3, pp. 1126-1159, doi: [10.1108/itp-01-2021-0063](https://doi.org/10.1108/itp-01-2021-0063).
- Liu, T. and Liu, M. (2024), "Does cross-channel consistency always create brand loyalty in omnichannel retailing?", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 52 No. 1, pp. 125-145, doi: [10.1108/ijrdm-12-2022-0517](https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-12-2022-0517).
- Maggioni, I., Sands, S.J., Ferraro, C.R., Pallant, J.I., Pallant, J.L., Shedd, L. and Tojib, D. (2020), "Consumer cross-channel behaviour: is it always planned?", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 48 No. 12, pp. 1357-1375, doi: [10.1108/ijrdm-03-2020-0103](https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-03-2020-0103).
- Neslin, S.A. (2022), "The omnichannel continuum: integrating online and offline channels along the customer journey", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 98 No. 1, pp. 111-132, doi: [10.1016/j.jretai.2022.02.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2022.02.003).
- Neslin, S.A., Grewal, D., Leghorn, R., Shankar, V., Teerling, M.L., Thomas, J.S. and Verhoef, P.C. (2006), "Challenges and opportunities in multichannel customer management", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 95-112, doi: [10.1177/1094670506293559](https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670506293559).
- Noordewier, M.K. and Breugelmans, S.M. (2013), "On the valence of surprise", *Cognition & Emotion*, Vol. 27 No. 7, pp. 1326-1334.
- Ortony, A., Clore, G.L. and Collins, A. (1988), *The Cognitive Structure of Emotions*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Ozen, H. and Nil, E. (2014), "Shopping online without thinking: being emotional or rational?", *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 78-93.
- Ozer, S., Oyman, M. and Ugurhan, Y.Z.C. (2020), "The surprise effect of ambient ad on the path leading to purchase: testing the role of attitude toward the brand", *Journal of Marketing Communications*, Vol. 26 No. 6, pp. 615-635, doi: [10.1080/13527266.2018.1555544](https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2018.1555544).
- Park, J. and Kim, R.B. (2019), "The effects of integrated information and service, institutional mechanism and need for cognition (NFC) on consumer omnichannel adoption behavior", *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, Vol. 33, pp. 1386-1414.
- Radomska, J., Kawa, A., Hajdas, M., Klimas, P. and Silva, S.C. (2024), "Unveiling retail omnichannel challenges: developing an omnichannel obstacles scale", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 53 No. 13, pp. 1-20, doi: [10.1108/ijrdm-04-2024-0169](https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-04-2024-0169).
- Rick, S.I., Pereira, B. and Burson, K.A. (2014), "The benefits of retail therapy: making purchase decisions reduces residual sadness", *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 24 No. 3, pp. 373-380, doi: [10.1016/j.jcps.2013.12.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2013.12.004).

- Sai Vijay, T., Prashar, S. and Singh, S. (2025), "Understanding e-retailer characteristics and post-purchase behaviour: moderating role of confirmation", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 53 No. 3, pp. 260-277, doi: [10.1108/ijrdm-03-2024-0106](https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-03-2024-0106).
- Sarstedt, M., Henseler, J. and Ringle, C.M. (2011), "Multigroup analysis in partial least squares (PLS) path modeling: alternative methods and empirical results", in Sarstedt, M., Schwaiger, M. and Taylor, C.R. (Eds), *Measurement and Research Methods in International Marketing*, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp. 195-218.
- Shibly, S.A. and Chatterjee, S. (2020), "Surprise rewards and brand evaluations: the role of intrinsic motivation and reward format", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 113, pp. 39-48, doi: [10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.03.009](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.03.009).
- Sorkun, M.F., İseyinoğlu, İ.Ö.Y. and Börühan, G. (2020), "Omni-channel capability and customer satisfaction: mediating roles of flexibility and operational logistics service quality", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 48 No. 6, pp. 629-648, doi: [10.1108/ijrdm-07-2019-0235](https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-07-2019-0235).
- Sparks, R.L., Artzer, M., Ganschow, L., Siebenhar, D., Plageman, M. and Patton, J. (1998), "Differences in native-language skills, foreign-language aptitude, and foreign-language grades among high-average-and low-proficiency foreign-language learners: two studies", *Language Testing*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 181-216, doi: [10.1177/026553229801500203](https://doi.org/10.1177/026553229801500203).
- Tena-Monferrer, S., Fandos-Roig, J.C., Sánchez-García, J. and Callarisa-Fiol, L.J. (2022), "Shopping motivation in consumer loyalty formation process: the case of Spanish retail", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 50 No. 1, pp. 100-116, doi: [10.1108/ijrdm-06-2020-0200](https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-06-2020-0200).
- Towers, A. and Towers, N. (2022), "Framing the customer journey: touch point categories and decision-making process stages", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 50 No. 3, pp. 317-341, doi: [10.1108/ijrdm-08-2020-0296](https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-08-2020-0296).
- Tueanrat, Y., Papagiannidis, S. and Alamanos, E. (2021), "A conceptual framework of the antecedents of customer journey satisfaction in omnichannel retailing", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 61, 102550, doi: [10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102550](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102550).
- Valenzuela, A., Mellers, B. and trebel, J. (2010), "Pleasurable surprises: a cross-cultural study of consumer responses to unexpected incentives", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 36 No. 5, pp. 792-805, doi: [10.1086/605592](https://doi.org/10.1086/605592).
- Vanhamme, J. (2000), "The link between surprise and satisfaction: an exploratory research on how best to measure surprise", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 16 No. 6, pp. 565-582, doi: [10.1362/026725700785045949](https://doi.org/10.1362/026725700785045949).
- Verhoef, P.C., Kannan, P. and Inman, J.J. (2015), "From multi-channel retailing to omnichannel retailing: introduction to the special issue on multi-channel retailing", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 91 No. 2, pp. 174-181, doi: [10.1016/j.jretai.2015.02.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2015.02.005).
- Wagner, T. and Rudolph, T. (2010), "Towards a hierarchical theory of shopping motivation", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 17 No. 5, pp. 415-429, doi: [10.1016/j.jretconser.2010.04.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2010.04.003).
- Wang, X. and Wan, N. (2020), "Exclusive Interview: Uniqlo's 10-Year Transformation into Taiwan's 'National Brand' — Japanese CEO Reveals Four Key Management Strategies", Taipei: *Business Today* [Online], available at: <https://www.businesstoday.com.tw/article/category/183016/post/202008190006/> (accessed 2 February 2026).
- Wu, L., Mattila, A.S. and Hanks, L. (2015), "Investigating the impact of surprise rewards on consumer responses", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 50, pp. 27-35, doi: [10.1016/j.ijhm.2015.07.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2015.07.004).
- Xia, L., Monroe, K.B. and Cox, J.L. (2004), "The price is unfair! A conceptual framework of price fairness perceptions", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 62 No. 4, pp. 1-15, doi: [10.1509/jmkg.68.4.1.42733](https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.68.4.1.42733).

- Xu, X. (2020), "Examining the role of emotion in online consumer reviews of various attributes in the surprise box shopping model", *Decision Support Systems*, Vol. 136, 113344, doi: [10.1016/j.dss.2020.113344](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2020.113344).
- Zhang, M., Ren, C., Wang, G.A. and Hea, Z. (2018), "The impact of channel integration on consumer responses in omni-channel retailing: the mediating effect of consumer empowerment", *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, Vol. 28, pp. 181-193, doi: [10.1016/j.elerap.2018.02.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2018.02.002).
- Zulauf, K. and Wagner, R. (2022), "Online shopping therapy: if you want to be happy, shop around", *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 34 No. 3, pp. 332-345, doi: [10.1080/08961530.2021.1955425](https://doi.org/10.1080/08961530.2021.1955425).

Corresponding author

Chia-Ying Li can be contacted at: cyli@mis.nsysu.edu.tw